



Subject: Open letter to European Parliament candidates on the right to produce and be nourished without GMOs

Brussels, 14 May, 2019

For the right to produce and be nourished without GMO, let's avoid today the next food super-scandal!

Dear candidate,

In order to pressure peasants and consumers to cultivate and eat GMOs (which none of them want) the seed industry pretends that the GMOs resulting from “new techniques” are not GMOs. For some years and with far from independent researchers, the industry has been orchestrating an unprecedented communication campaign in order to be exempt of any regulation and labelling. The peasants', organic and civil society organizations, call upon the elected members and the governments to avoid being confused by the fake promises of the seed lobby. This lobby demands an amendment of the EU directive on GMOs that allows them to sell GMOs in Europe without any obligation of prior assessment, labelling and traceability. Contrary to this, what we really need is to keep the directive as it is and to enforce it rigorously so that the right of consumers to know what they eat and the right of peasants to know what they produce, are both respected, as well as the right to continue a type of GMO free agriculture and an agriculture free of the risk of pollution by non-declared GMOs.

Those fake promises are as follows:

False: New GMOs are a must in order to feed the world population and adapt to climate change.

GMO have been breaking their own fake promises for 30 years. Their only concerns are industrial monocultures and the seed industry revenues, they mostly feed the cattle and vehicles of the richest countries, they increase the expansion of pesticides, they pollute non-

GMO crops as well as diversity in the wild, they destroy the soil's fertility and increasingly plunder forests and land taken from the poorest peasants.

We already do produce more food than necessary. Unequal distribution, food waste and the bad quality of industrial food are the real cause of both persistent famine and obesity epidemics. Such abhorrences of the industrial food system will not be solved by the DYW of a couple of patented genes, but by a broad and massive support for the development of peasant agroecology.

Peasant and small scale agriculture, mainly based on agroecological production, produces today 3/4 of the food available on the planet using merely 1/4 of arable land. It is far more productive than industrial agriculture, which produces only 1/4 of the food using 3/4 of the land. The plants' adaptive traits to climate change can't be produced in the labs that manipulate genes, but are developed in the fields by peasants who, year in, year out, select the very best seeds from their harvest.

False: The new techniques of genetic modification do the same as nature, just at an increased speed

Multiplying cells out of their body of origin, replacing the latter by chemical bathing, growth hormones and insertion of foreign genetic material aimed at breaking and modifying the natural genes causes great disturbance to the natural mechanisms of gene repair as well as a myriad of gene modifications that would never take place naturally.

Violating the laws of natural evolution in order to become faster than nature is not the natural way to go. Between two natural mutations of the same body, the gene is slowly reorganised and it takes many reproductions resulting from both the environmental influence and the natural selection process.

The new GMO techniques cause multiple mutations at once, something nature would never do, except for a catastrophic event of great proportions causing massive extinction.

Plants modified by these means in the laboratory can't adapt to the natural environment and can't survive without the need of steadily increasing amounts of toxic pesticides. This is why the life span of GMO varieties qualified as "sustainable" is a couple of years, while "ancient" varieties, chosen by our grandparents continue to be cultivated.

False: Organisms resulting from the new GMO techniques are similar to those obtained by traditional breeding methods.

It is a fact that the description made of the specific gene modification stated in the patents or some scientific publications can't be distinguished from other kinds of gene modifications. But the "new techniques" cause a myriad of knock-on effect genetic and epigenetic modifications, the so-called "non intentional" ones, and these differ notably from the changes that traditional selection methods produce. Most of these unintentional modifications are not identified nor eliminated by the laboratories, hence being able to cause great damage to health and/or the environment.

Failing to assess these risks before commercialisation would mean to use peasants and consumers as guinea-pigs of these hazardous manipulations of life and would prove dismissive of the principle of precaution enshrined in the European treaties.

False: New GMO can't be regulated because their detection is impossible.

Scientific experts from the European Commission have acknowledged that detection is possible as long as the seed industry abides to the rules that oblige to identify counterfeit GMOs and the procedures to do it.

Identification methods such as the "genetic context", guarantee the absence of GMO patented by competitors in plants used for new selections or to produce counterfeits of their own GMO patents. If the patented genetic modification can't be distinguished from other genetic traits that exist elsewhere, the multiple unintentional modifications resulting from the "new techniques" are a cluster of signatures, the use of which can't be questioned. Refusing to provide such methods to the services in charge of enforcing the law will allow for some corporations to make a fortune...until the day when their fraud is unveiled.

False: "New gene techniques will allow preservation of biodiversity"

New techniques of genetic forcing promise to eradicate once and for all whole species. Such threat does not address at all the protection of biodiversity. The fuel for implementing these expensive GMO "new techniques" is the patent. The revenues resulting from investing in the patent of a single trait inserted in multiple varieties of species cultivated worldwide is extraordinary. The speculation on promises of such financial revenues are at the core of the great concentration of the seed industry. It has allowed for three multinational corporations to own the biggest patent folders and thus, to absorb most of their competitors and to con-

trol today the 60% of the world market of commercial seeds. The main interest of these corporations is to reduce the biodiversity cultivated in their soils to the single patented traits- not to increase it. On the other hand, peasants' selection is unique when it comes to adapting plants to each and every ecosystem and to climate change variations in each ecosystem; they can't be patented and they're free for everyone.

Hundreds of thousands of peasants selecting each year new seeds from their harvests produce far more biodiversity adapted to their own cultivating conditions than a couple of thousand researchers locked in their labs behind their computer screens.

But nowadays, the extent of patents with new genetic information resulting from the "new techniques" reaches every seed with a similar genetic information, whether they are or not issued by the invention that justified the patent in the first place.

Only the GMO regulation makes it a requirement to indicate the methods that distinguish a "creation" from another seed with similar genetic information. This regulation will also block the confiscation of all the peasants' seeds and all the public genetic resources that freely roam the planet today. The stakes are high, which explains the media storm created by some seed multinationals, who see the regulation of their new GMOs as an unacceptable limitation on their goal of totally controlling the global food chain through non-declared new GMO patents.

This is why peasants' and agricultural workers' organizations unified under the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)¹, signing this document demand to Government and elected members alike:

- **the strict enforcement of the European Union GMO regulation for all new GMOs,**
- **the immediate creation of a research program to elaborate the needed techniques which are essential to identify new GMOs,**
- **the obligation to make public the information about the obtaining, selection and multiplication techniques of every commercialized seed.**

¹ The European Coordination Via Campesina is a European grassroots organization which currently gathers 29 national and regional farmers, farm workers and rural organizations based in 19 European countries. Rooted on the right to Food Sovereignty, our main objective is the defence of farmers' and field workers' rights as well as the promotion of diverse and sustainable family and peasant farming. More info on www.eurovia.org

We request from you to take a position in this matter and offer you full availability to contact us for further questions or clarifications.

Please accept, dear candidates, the expression of our highest consideration.

Ramona Duminiciou et Alessandra Turco,

Members of the ECVV Coordination Committee

For more information please contact us at:

info@eurovia.org

European Coordination Via Campesina

Rue de la Sablonnière 18, 1000 Bruxelles,

Belgium+32 22173112 | www.eurovia.org